(a) whether a review has been made on the progress of various works to set up the steel plant at Duburi plant near Jaipur Road in Orissa;

(b) if so, the progress of that plant as on date;

(c) the date by which the project would be completed; and

(d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI DILIP RAY) ; (a) The review of the progress of Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd. (NINL) is being done by Project Implementation and review Committee, a Sub-Committee of the Board, every month as well as by the Board almost every quarter. The progress is also being reviewed by the Principal Secretary (Steel & Mines), Government of Orissa every month as well as at the level of Chief Secretary, Government of Orissa. The progress is also being reviewed by the Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Steel, Govt. of India from time to time. In addition, the financial Institutions do also monitor the progress of the project.

(b) to (d) NINL is setting up an integrated steel plant with a capacity of 1.1 million tonne per annum for the production of pig iron, steel billets and wire rods. The plant is based on BF-BOF Technology and would comprise of various units for iron making as well as steel making/rolling. The integrated steel plant is being commissioned in phases. As on date, about 75% of work of the first phase of the project for manufacture of Pig Iron has been completed and is slated for commissioning by the end of this year. The work on second phase of the project *i.e.* for steel making is in the initial stage and is expected to be commissioned by the end of next financial year (2001-02).

Strategy For Tapping Rural Maket of SAIL products

4519. SHRI R.S. GAVAI : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Steel Authority of India Ltd. has formulated a strategy to focus towards the vast untapped rural market for its products;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Institute of Rural Management has been appointed as consultant for assessing the rural demand;

(d) if so, the projection given by the IRM;

(e) whether the SAIL proposes to set up rural service centres to make availability of steel; and

(f) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) to (f) As a part of the strategy to tap the potential rural market, SAIL has engaged Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRM) to undertake a study to assess the current trend of demand for steel material in the rural market segment in the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra & Rajasthan. IRM are also required to suggest, *inter-alia,* specific marketing actions and to assess the need to promote the concept of service centres.

Institute of Rural Management, Anand is yet to submit its report on the study.

Agitation by VSP Workers

4520. SHRI RAMACHANDRAIAH RUMANDLA : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether workers of Visakhapatnam Steel plant were lathi charged recently for agitation;

(b) if so, the causes for the agitation; and

(c) the action taken on the demands of the workers ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) to (c) Some workers of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant were lathi charged recently by the Police, as they had violated prohibitory orders in force under Section 144 CR. PC. The agitation was to demand steps to be taken to avoid privatisation of Visakhapatnam Steel plant. Visakhapatnam Steel plant had submitted a comprehensive turn around proposal for its revival which *inter-alia* included waiver of lossess. The Disinvestment Commission has recommended writing off of the entire accumulated losses of the company as oh 31-3-1999 alongwith disinvestment of not less than 51% of its remaining equity to a strategic buyer. The matter is in an advanced stage of inter-ministerial consultations. No final decision has yet been taken.